



555 West Washington Ave, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703

www.wccf.org
☎ 608-284-0580
✉ 608-284-0583

For Immediate Release
February 14th, 2007

Contact: Charity Eleson 608-206-5237
Julie Laundrie 608-284-0580 ext 303

Governor's Budget Addresses Needs of Children and Families

Health Care for All Kid - Quality Rating for Early Education

Madison – Governor Doyle's budget address Tuesday night outlined an agenda that assists Wisconsin's families and children with health care coverage, targeted property tax relief and the beginning steps toward developing a high quality early child care system in Wisconsin.

"While we have more to learn about the details," said Charity Eleson, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) executive director, "The Governor's budget offers health care coverage to all Wisconsin's children, takes steps toward improving the quality of early child care programs for children, and gives targeted property tax relief to low-income households."

BadgerCare Plus, as proposed as a part of Governor Doyle's budget, offers health care coverage for virtually every child in Wisconsin. The expansion of BadgerCare, a successful and cost-effective health care program, is a strong example of building upon existing state programs to offer health care alternatives for the uninsured.

"BadgerCare Plus is an efficient way to deliver health care to children and helps avoid high cost hospitalizations and emergency rooms later for preventable childhood illness. Wisconsin has always been a national leader in providing health care coverage to children, and closing the gap and covering all kids is the right choice to make in this budget," said Jon Peacock, WCCF research director.

The early education and care proposals in the Governor's budget include a quality rating system, start-up grants for school districts wishing to start four-year-old kindergarten programs, and increases in TEACH and REWARD grants to improve education and training for early childhood teachers and family child care providers.

"Steps to improve the quality of early care and education through a rating program and increased education for providers will help all parents needing child care by providing information on the quality of early care providers throughout the state. The inclusion of start-up grants for school districts wanting to offer four-year-old kindergarten to children should help communities offer expanded early education opportunities," said Eleson.

The budget also proposes to improve the Homestead Tax Credit by indexing it to inflation, making it a more effective form of property tax relief for households.

“While we are pleased with many of the initiatives the Governor has advanced, we have substantial concerns about how the Governor has addressed the deficit in the Wisconsin Shares program, which provides child care tuition assistance to low-income working families,” said Eelson. “This is one of the most essential programs Wisconsin has to help families obtain child care for their children while parents are at work. While the Governor partially filled the Shares deficit, changes that result in loss of child care support to children and their families are simply unacceptable.”

Other portions of the Doyle budget WCCF supports:

Department of Children and Family Services: The creation of one state agency to streamline programs and services that touch the lives of Wisconsin’s children every day is a creative way to improve accessibility for parents and make for more efficient services. WCCF recommends the Legislature include juvenile justice programs in the department’s array of services.

Expansion of Student Financial Aid: Expanding student financial aid will make it possible for more people to obtain higher education. WCCF recommends that the Legislature modify eligibility for financial aid to make it more accessible to low-income working parents.

Transitional Jobs Pilot: Creation of a pilot transitional jobs program helps to focus on the strengths of the individual and to provide ongoing case management during employment. A transitional jobs program within W-2 could help improve the employment and earnings outcomes of many W-2 participants.

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families: Celebrating 125 years Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count